



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

# News Release

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## **Corps and Service Announce Successful Fish Habitat Construction**

OMAHA, NEB. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced the construction of more than 1,200 acres of shallow water habitat for the endangered pallid sturgeon as recommended by the Service in its 2003 Amended Biological Opinion. This effort ensures that all authorized purposes will be met this summer, including maintaining minimum flows on the Missouri River without a split navigation season.

The announcement follows the June 21 ruling by the U.S. District Court for Minnesota in favor of the Corps and Service in all five cases pending before it. The suits involved a number of issues concerning the new Master Manual and 2004 Annual Operating Plan, reservoir storage levels and endangered species protection. “The Corps must consider, evaluate and balance all interests in its operation of the Missouri River,” said Judge Paul Magnuson in his ruling.

“Through hard work and unprecedented cooperation, the Corps of Engineers and Fish and Wildlife Service, other federal agencies, and the states of Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri have succeeded in providing stability and predictability to the operation of the Missouri River for the first time in 15 years,” Interior Secretary Gale Norton said. “They have achieved the twin goals of providing the habitat needed by the pallid sturgeon and other species, while following the continued management of the river for navigation and flood control. In fact, in the past five months, we have done more to create new habitat for the sturgeon on the river than ever before.”

“I am very pleased that the court has confirmed the validity of the Army Corps of Engineers’ management of the Missouri River system, and has vindicated the new Missouri River Master Manual,” said John Paul Woodley Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works). “Citizens throughout the entire basin can now have more confidence than ever that they have a reliable roadmap to provide for their livelihoods in ways that are environmentally sustainable.”

The Corps constructed the new fish habitat from Ponca State Park on the Nebraska-South Dakota border to the mouth of the Osage River in central Missouri to comply with the Endangered Species Act. It will provide nursery habitat for the pallid sturgeon and other native fish. In addition, new sandbar habitat using the dredged sand was created for the endangered interior least tern and threatened piping plover. Both terns and plovers are already nesting on some of the new sandbars below Gavins Point Dam. More than 500 dikes were notched and 24 specific sites were constructed to create about 1,400 to 1,800 acres of shallow water habitat for the fish by July 1.

The Service determined that the work complies with the 2003 Amended Biological Opinion to make 1,200 acres of new habitat available to the pallid sturgeon, allowing the Corps to modify summer flows. Shallow water habitat is defined by the Service as water less than five feet deep, flowing at less than 2.5 feet per second.

“The Corps and Service are committed to improving the survival of the protected species, serving the multiple purposes of the reservoir system as authorized by the Congress, and providing predictability to water users in the basin,” said Brig. Gen. William Grisoli, Northwestern Division Engineer.

Restoration of shallow water habitat is one element of the recovery program for the Missouri River. These new acres of habitat are the first installment on 2,000 acres to be built by 2005. A total of 20,000 acres is to be built along the entire length of the Missouri River over the next 20 years.

The recovery plan also includes creation of additional sandbar habitat, expansion and modernization of hatcheries for pallid sturgeon propagation, and comprehensive research, monitoring and evaluation of efforts to recover native river fish and wildlife. Concerted ecosystem restoration efforts will continue for decades to come.

“The people of the entire basin must work together as partners – federal, tribes, state and local agencies as well as the diverse stakeholders – and remain committed to preserving the Missouri River as a national treasure,” said Grisoli, “allowing everyone to enjoy its beauty and many resources.”

The shallow water habitat report, executive summary, news release and related information are available on the Northwestern Division website at [www.nwd.usace.army.mil](http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil) and on the “Hot Topics” section of the Corps’ website at [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil).